

Lights and Shadows

Volume 33 *Lights and Shadows* Volume 33

Article 6

1989

Open Sesame

Larry W. Adams

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.una.edu/lightsandshadows>



Part of the [Nonfiction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Adams, L. W. (1989). Open Sesame. *Lights and Shadows*, 33 (1). Retrieved from <https://ir.una.edu/lightsandshadows/vol33/iss1/6>

This Prose is brought to you for free and open access by UNA Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Lights and Shadows* by an authorized editor of UNA Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact jpate1@una.edu.

Open Sesame

Larry W. Adams
Second Place Essay

As life begins, the very young have their universe close at hand. The crib, then the nursery, is the sum of their world. Later they will become mobile, and an open door becomes the essence of what lies in the great beyond. Their imagination becomes a fertile garden for prediction and fantasy. The vistas and horizons now seen just beyond the portal are the source of all that is hope, and expectation, and fear. An open door can be a gateway to adventure for a child. Doors that are closed, however, are obstacles to further learning and understanding about the world.

There is nothing more frustrating than a "closed door." To the young, the helplessness and frustration accompanying being physically unable to open a closed door is literal. As age and maturity come, so do "closed doors" of a political sort, but the rage, frustration, and helplessness are no less real.

There is natural tendency among human beings to stretch intellectually. It is generally held that there is something definitely wrong with a person who lacks an innate curiosity. The need to explore and master the environment is a strong one in the vast majority of people. Because this need to stretch and grow exists, books and the written word are a lot like doors.

The cover of a book should be more than a mere dust barrier. Rather, a book can be the "door" to the sum of man's knowledge, and the thinking about that knowledge. When a book is opened, and read, universes unfold. Ages and eras come alive. People and places are once again real, or if they never have been, step into the realms of possibility. The opposite is also true—books can be a closed door.

A book resting on the shelf, unopened, can never be read. Sometimes a book is unopened because potential readers are unaware it exists. Therefore its universes, worlds, civilizations, and societies remain hidden. A child kept indoors will never know the world beyond the physical doors barring access to the outside. By the same token, people denied access to a book might as well have a door slammed in their faces. This is why it is important to expose certain age groups to a variety of literature.

When thinking about what to put on a "should read" list for high school students, there are possibly one or two works that inevitably show up on every list. From this point forward, however, the choice is purely subjective. With this fact in mind, I suggest adding Aldous Huxley to the list.

The idea that Aldous Huxley should be required reading for high school students is certain to provoke mixed reactions. People generally tend to classify Huxley in

one of two categories. They think he is one of the great philosophers of recent time, or he is a complete fool. I vote for philosopher.

Huxley is a writer that provokes introspection. He forces an issue and demands attention to it. All the mores, folkways, norms, and traditions of our society and culture are fair game in his writings. Huxley examines not only what was and is, but forces the projection, prediction, and prophesy of what may and can be. Huxley explores all the scenarios, a different one with each novel, any one of which could be used to great effect with teens.

Teens are a special breed of people, old enough to think deeply, but not experienced enough to know what to think about. Almost everything is interest-

ing, and to a teen, even the absurd deserves, and usually gets, attention. Teens naturally question the things of their parents in effort to find that which is uniquely their own. This need for exploration also needs direction, and this is where Huxley's novels may help.

***Teens are a special breed of people,
old enough to think deeply,
but not experienced enough to know
what to think about.***

The testtube babies of "Brave New World" are commonplace within the boundaries of current technology. No

longer is the possibility of decanting future generations discussed, but rather if decanting should be done. The toll of the bell of doom peals clearly for materialism in Huxley's "Island." Man at his lowest common denominator forms the basis for "Ape and Essence." Even the psuedo-intellectual is not immune to Huxley's lampooning pen in "Antic Hay." Surely these are valid concepts for teens to consider. Valid or not, teens must eventually consider them in spite of what they read. Would it not be better for experience, education, and the wisdom of age to direct the investigation?

The hope of any society lies in not being too blind to their shortcomings, and once having seen them, too stubborn to reform. The freshness and energy of youth still idealizes the ability to strive for the ideal, and will do so given the opportunity to try. Teens are not afraid to look at themselves seriously and critically. They are ready and enthusiastic to face the "Brave New World." The question is, are we as parents and educators ready to help them? □